

**NCSCP Steering Committee Meeting Summary**  
**June 14, 2017**  
**Weymouth Woods - Sandhills Nature Preserve**

Steering Committee Attendance:

Present

Pete Edmunds	Chair	Fort Bragg/DPTM
Brady Beck		NCWRC
Susan Miller	(Alternate for Pete Benjamin)	USFWS
Jimmy Dodson	(Alternate for Jon Blanchard)	NCDPR
Jay Carter	(Alternate for Phil Doerr)	SEI
Sarah Crate	(Alternate for Mark Bost)	NCFS
Jeff Marcus		TNC
Jesse Wimberley	(Alternate for Nancy Talton)	SALT

Absent

Scott Pohlman	NCDENR/CPCA
Dave Heins	Fort Bragg/DPW
Susan James	USAEC

Other Attendees

Katie Martin (NCSU), John Hammond (USFWS), Mike Martin (NCWRC), Kerry Brust (SEI), Rex Badgett (NCDOT), Rod Fleming (Ft Bragg), Allen Shultz (Ft Bragg), Caroline Krom (USFWS), Jackie Britcher (Ft Bragg), Gabriella Garrison (NCWRC), Stephanie Wagner (SALT), Jim Dougherty (Ft Bragg), Janet Gray (Ft Bragg), Paula Garcia (Ft Bragg), Kacey Cook (NCWRC), Alba Polonkey (Sustainable Sandhills)

Notes

**Joint Land Use Study: (Vagn Hansen/Jim Dougherty)**

- The overall goal of the plan is to protect Fort Bragg's mission, as well as address regional growth patterns and protect natural resources. Furthermore, it seeks to help reduce conflict in the region as it continues to grow and change.
- Phase 1 of the study has been completed. The main goal was to interview stakeholders for their interests/concerns.
- Kickoff presentations have been held within Harnett, Scotland, Hoke Moore, Cumberland, and Richmond counties.
- Over 80 stakeholders were interviewed.
- Phase 2 is largely completed as well. The main goal was to gather data/information.
- A number of challenges/constraints have been identified including loss of land available for training, as well as airspace for aircraft.
- Harnett and Hoke counties are growing at the highest rates in the region. Scotland and Richmond are projected to lose population. Most of the major cities in the region are growing.
- The areas that are going the fastest also have the highest rates of housing development.

- A significant amount of past growth and projected growth is happening just west of Fayetteville, Spring Lake, and Southern Pines.
- There are a number of threatened and endangered species on Fort Bragg, including the RCW.
- The plan examines a variety of air and water quality challenges, as well as a climate resilient study has been completed for the region.
- Preliminary studies show that there probably are not significant deposits of oil or gas in the region, potentially limiting the spread of fracking.
- Climate projections suggest that the climate will become warmer and potentially wetter. Weather will become more extreme with higher probabilities of flooding or drought.
- Phase 3 is currently in progress and will be completed this fall. After it's complete, counties meetings will be held again.
- Phase 4 and 5 are slated to be completed by June 2018.
- There was some discussion about whether NCDOT would take over jurisdiction of the roads on Ft Bragg. Several individuals said that this was probably just a 'rumor' and is unlikely to happen.

**FEEDBACK:** Several individuals provided feedback that is captured below.

- Additional information about the climate projections is needed. What is the time period for the projections? How many climate models were examined? What is the variability across the models in regards to changes in temperature and precipitation?
- Has there been some effort to look into funds for implementation? Could collaboration take place with the Green Growth Toolbox?

#### **America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative Report: (Ryan Bollinger)**

- This is the fourth year that the accomplishment report has been generated.
- Major accomplishments: more than 400,000 acres have been burned on private lands. Restoration activities were reported on 2 million acres. Approximately 140,000 acres were planted in longleaf
- Longleaf establishment is dropping across the range, which could be problematic in meeting the 2020 goal of reaching 8 million acres of longleaf.
- The number of annual acres burned has increased since 2013 across the range of longleaf.
- We need to restore 3.3 million acres to meet our 2020 goal. In order to accomplish this, a range-wide 'road map' is being developed to prioritize this effort.
- LITs are being asked to provide a detailed restoration plan. This will probably be due at the end of the year.

#### **Science and Conservation Report: (Matthew Moskwik)**

- Work on the models to identify and assess the condition of longleaf within North Carolina is on schedule. At this time, the models should be complete by the end of this year.
- The top topic identified in the conservation research needs assessment was management for species of concern. Many respondents indicated that they do not have enough information about species of concern to properly manage for them. Lynn Richards, a retired research librarian, is working to obtain this information from scientific journals, technical documents, and

state and federal agencies. After compilation of the information, a presentation will be given to the steering committee and be made available to everyone in the Sandhills.

- After discussions with TNC's Water Director, Julie DeMeester, we decided to submit a request to the state to list Drowning Creek as an impaired water due to reduced e-flows. We have yet to receive a response. If Drowning Creek is listed, it should not affect withdrawals for drinking water by the City of Southern Pines.

## **WORKING GROUP UPDATES**

### **Resource Management Working Group** – Brady Beck

- The group has been inactive because of fire season. Later this summer/fall the group will meet and plan an outing.

### **Communications Working Group** – Debbie Crane

- No report received.

### **RCW Working Group** – Jay Carter and Kerry Brust

- Members of the RCW Recovery Working Group organized a field tour with USFWS RCW Recovery Coordinator Will McDearman to Western Fort Bragg and Sandhills Game Land to discuss forestry and silvicultural practices within RCW clusters and foraging habitat within and across Partner Lands.
- Kerry provided an overview of breeding activity across the Sandhills. There were several lost as well as new clusters. For more detail, please see submitted Working Group Report.

### **Land Protection Working Group** – Jeff Marcus

- There were no land closings between March 8 – June 14, 2017, in part because the Army instituted a "Pause" for the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program in order to audit the program and review procedures nation-wide. As of early June, the Pause has been lifted with some new protocols in place. TNC and SALT are actively working on new acquisition projects, and WRC will soon purchase 2 TNC-held properties to add to Sandhills Game Land.

### **Reserve Design Working Group** – Matthew Moskwik

- We are in the process of completing upland longleaf surveys. There are around 10 sites remaining. After all surveys are complete, all reserve design layers will be updated and provided to the Green Growth Toolbox.
- Later this month, work will begin on assessing streamhead pocosins, seeps, and canebrakes within the Sandhills.
- A manuscript has been submitted to the Journal of Herpetology that summarizes our efforts/results from assessing ephemeral wetlands in the Sandhills.
- See earlier topic 'Conservation and Science Report' for additional information.

## **PARTNER UPDATES**

NCFS – Sarah Crate, highlights include:

- Two longleaf academies are on the calendar in North Carolina. This September the course will be Understory 201 at Waccamaw State Park. The second course will be in June 2018 in the Sandhills. The content of the second course will be Fire 201.

USFWS – John Hammond, highlights included:

- The Species Status Assessment (SSA) process is continuing for RCWs.

SALT – Jesse Wimberley, highlights included:

- SALT's NFWF grant is coming to a close. The PBA will be doing a burn later this week.

TNC – Jeff Marcus, highlights included:

- Dan Ryan has left TNC.
- A new cycle of NFWF is on the horizon.

Ft. Bragg- Pete Benjamin and Allan Shultz, highlights included:

Tomorrow, a new garrison commander will start at Ft. Bragg.

- The ACUB pause has been lifted. 85% of how business was done in the past will probably not change.
- Today is the Army's birthday.
- 53,000 acres have been burned this season on Ft. Bragg.
- They are wrapping up some deer and quail studies.

WRC - Brady Beck, highlights included:

- Chris has taken a job in Raleigh, so a new manager will need to be trained. A meeting to discuss this past season's shared crew with TNC will be taking place soon.

## **REGIONAL PARTNER UPDATES**

Sustainable Sandhills:

- Working with the Cape Fear River Assembly to hold a conference in September.

## **Other News and Points of Discussion**

- The week of October 23, the Longleaf Partnership will be visiting the Sandhills.
- The NC Prescribed Burn Council will be held in Asheville this year. The focus will be on fire in the mountains.

Meeting Adjourned at 4:15 PM